

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO
EASTERN DIVISION**

**IN RE: NATIONAL PRESCRIPTION,
OPIATE LITIGATION**

MDL NO. 2804

Case No. 17-MD-2804

THIS DOCUMENT RELATES TO:

Judge Dan Aaron Polster

Rees v. McKesson Corporation, et al.
S.D. IL, C.A. #18-00511; MDL Case #1:18-OP-45252

Wood v. Purdue Pharma L.P., et al
E.D. MO, C.A. #18-00385; MDL Case #1:18-OP-45264

Salmons v. Purdue Pharma L.P., et al
S.D. WV, C.A. #18-00385; MDL Case #1:18-OP-45268;

Ambrosio v. Purdue Pharma L.P., et al
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Flanagan v. Purdue Pharma L.P., et al
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Roach v. McKesson Corporation, et al.
E.D. LA, C.A. #18-04165; Transferred by CTO-27; awaiting MDL Case No.

Hunt v. Purdue Pharma L.P., et al
D. MD, C.A. #18-01349; Transferred by CTO-32; awaiting MDL Case No.

**MOTION FOR LEAVE TO FILE MOTION FOR ORDER
TO ESTABLISH SEPARATE TRACK FOR OPIOID BABY CLAIMS**

Plaintiffs respectfully move for leave to file a motion for the creation of a separate, limited

“Opioid Baby” track.

The undersigned was afforded the opportunity to discuss the creation of this track at the Court’s May 10, 2018 Status Conference. The proposed motion builds on this discussion and

formally requests the creation of this limited, separate track. The proposed motion and supporting memorandum are attached. Case Management Order #1, which precludes the filing of Motions before the Court by any party or lawyer other than those appointed, necessitates this request for leave.

For all of these reasons, Plaintiffs pray that their motion is granted.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Scott R. Bickford

MARTZELL, BICKFORD & CENTOLA

Scott R. Bickford (LA 1165)

Lawrence J. Centola, III (LA 27402)

Spencer R. Doody (LA 27795)

338 Lafayette Street

New Orleans, LA 70130

Telephone: 504-581-9065

Facsimile: 504-581-7635

sbickford@mbfirm.com

ljc@mbfirm.com

srd@mbfirm.com

usdendoh@mbfirm.com

/s/ Celeste Brustowicz

COOPER LAW FIRM, LLC

Celeste Brustowicz

Barry J. Cooper, Jr.

Stephen H. Wussow

Victor Cobb

1525 Religious Street

New Orleans, LA 70130

Telephone: 504-399-0009

Cbrustowicz@sch-llc.com

/s/ Kevin W. Thompson

THOMPSON BARNEY LAW FIRM

Kevin W. Thompson

David R. Barney, Jr.

2030 Kanawha Boulevard, East

Charleston, WV 25311

Telephone: 304-343-4401

Facsimile: 304-343-4405

Kwthompsonwv@gmail.com

/s/ James F. Clayborne

CLAYBORNE, SABO & WAGNER, LLP

Sen. James F. Clayborne (Bar No. 45627)

525 West Main Street, Suite 105

Belleville, IL 62220

Telephone: 618-239-0187

Facsimile: 618-416-7556

Jclayborne@cswlawllp.com

/s/ Jack W. Harang

LAW OFFICES OF JACK W. HARANG

Jack W. Harang

2433 Taffy Drive

Kenner, LA 70065

Telephone: 504-810-4734

jwharang@gmail.com

/s/ Warren Perrin

PERRIN, LANDRY, deLAUNAY

Warren Perrin

251 La Rue France

P. O. Box 53597

Lafayette, LA 70505

Telephone: 337-233-5832

Perrin@plddo.com

/s/ Kevin Malone

KRUPNICK CAMPBELL MALONE ET AL

Kevin Malone

12 SE 7th St #801

Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33301

Telephone: 954-763-8181

Kmalone@krupnicklaw.com

/s/ Kent Harrison Robbins

**THE LAW OFFICES OF KENT HARRISON
ROBBINS, P.A.**

Kent Harrison Robbins (FL 275484)

242 Northeast 27th Street

Miami, FL 33137

Telephone: 305-532-0500

Facsimile: 305-531-0150

Primary: Khr@khrlawoffices.com

Secondary: ereyes@khrlawoffices.com

Tertiary: assistant@khrlawoffices.com

/s/ Donald Creadore

THE CREADORE LAW FIRM, P.C.

Donald Creadore (NY 09202)

450 Seventh Avenue - 1408

New York, NY 10123

Telephone: 212-355-7200

Facsimile: 212-583-0412

Primary: donald@creadorelawfirm.com

Secondary: donald@aol.com

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on this 31st day of May, 2018, a copy of the above and foregoing has been electronically filed with the Clerk of Court using the CM/ECF system, which provides an electronic service notification to all counsel of record registered as CM/ECF users.

/s/SCOTT R. BICKFORD

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ORDER

Considering the foregoing Motion for Leave to File Motion for Order to Establish
Separate Track for Opioid Baby Claims;

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the motion is granted this ____ day of _____, 2018.

HONORABLE JUDGE DAN AARON POLSTER

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**MOTION TO ESTABLISH
SEPARATE TRACK FOR OPIOID BABY CLAIMS**

Plaintiffs and Putative Class Representatives, through undersigned counsel, respectfully request that this Court establish a separate, limited track for “Opioid Babies” as described below.

As discussed at length in the attached supporting memorandum, these cases were brought on

behalf of persons born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS). The Opioid Babies are as identifiable as they are blameless, and their interests are currently unrepresented in the ongoing settlement discussions and in the various limited tracks and committees recognized by the Court. They are suffering now and present the Court with the unique opportunity to assure delivery of life-changing medical intervention and a chance at a productive adult life.

The Motion and Relief Requested

Plaintiffs ask that the Court issue one or more Orders creating a separate limited discovery and litigation track for centralized discovery, case development, and bellwether trial(s) of Opioid Baby claims in this MDL. The relief requested requires modification of this Court's CMO #1 in MDL 2804. It likely also requires a new Case Management Order governing the new track, which Plaintiffs are prepared to propose to the Court. Within the order creating this track, it is respectfully requested that the Court:

1.

Authorize and direct specialized discovery and case development steps in a track unique to the claims of the "Opioid Babies," or persons born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS).

2.

Authorize proceedings against selected Defendants and using selected theories of the law, including theories unique, or particularly well suited, for the Opioid Babies' Claims.

3.

Direct counsel for the centralized efforts in the Opioid Baby track to coordinate non-unique discovery efforts where possible with centralized discovery efforts common to all centralized cases, and direct counsel for other tracks to coordinate these efforts.

4.

Select lead, coordinating, committee and trial counsel for the track.

5.

Select one or more bellwether cases, schedule them for trial and try the cases to verdicts and judgments.

6.

Define the role, and direct involvement of lead counsel for the track, in settlement negotiations but prohibit settlement without prior approval of the Court.

7.

Issue additional directions to counsel and the parties to govern the Opioid Baby track in the best interests of the track.

For all of these reasons, more fully expressed in the attached memorandum, Plaintiffs pray that their motion is granted.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Scott R. Bickford

MARTZELL, BICKFORD & CENTOLA

Scott R. Bickford (LA 1165)

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ljc@mbfirm.com

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Facsimile: 618-416-7556

Jclayborne@cswlawllp.com

/s/ Jack W. Harang

LAW OFFICES OF JACK W. HARANG

Jack W. Harang

2433 Taffy Drive

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jwharang@gmail.com

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PERRIN, LANDRY, deLAUNAY

Warren Perrin

251 La Rue France

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Telephone: 337-233-5832

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/s/ Kevin Malone

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Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33301

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Kent Harrison Robbins (FL 275484)

242 Northeast 27th Street

Miami, FL 33137

Telephone: 305-532-0500

Facsimile: 305-531-0150

Primary: Khr@khrlawoffices.com

Secondary: ereyes@khrlawoffices.com

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/s/ Donald Creadore

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Donald Creadore (NY 09202)

450 Seventh Avenue - 1408

New York, NY 10123

Telephone: 212-355-7200

Facsimile: 212-583-0412

Primary: donald@creadorelawfirm.com

Secondary: donald@aol.com

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**MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT OF
MOTION TO ESTABLISH SEPARATE TRACK FOR OPIOID BABIES**

MAY IT PLEASE THE COURT:

Plaintiffs, individually and on behalf of all putative class members in the above captioned matters, submit this memorandum in support of their Motion for the creation a separate track within this MDL for cases brought on behalf of persons born with neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS),

or the “Opioid Babies.” The Opioid Babies are as identifiable as they are blameless, and their interests are currently unrepresented in the ongoing settlement discussions and in the various limited tracks and committees recognized by the Court. They are suffering now.

INTRODUCTION

Infants born with neonatal abstinence syndrome present the Court with a unique opportunity to assure delivery of life-changing medical intervention and a chance at a productive adult life. Members of this putative class by definition suffer from neurotoxic drug exposures, bear no contributory fault whatsoever, and share common issues of fact and law revolving around the fault of the Defendants.

Each year, tens of thousands of infants in the US are born with NAS, and the number has increased nearly 5-fold between 2000 and 2012 and continues to grow.¹ The period of hospitalization for NAS averages 16 days and hospital costs for a typical newborn with NAS are \$159,000-\$238,000 greater than those of healthy newborns.² Recent evidence shows that long-term cognitive development is impaired in these children and will require comprehensive therapy from physicians and nurses, speech and language therapists, physical and occupational therapists, early enrichment programs, special education programs, and later assistance with job or vocational training.

¹ Journal of Perinatology volume 35, pages 650–655 (2015)
doi:10.1038/jp.2015.36
<https://www.nature.com/articles/jp201536>; Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome and Associated Health Care Expenditures
United States, 2000-2009 pub May 9, 2012
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/1151530>

² Peltz, G., & Anand, K. J. (2015). Long-Acting Opioids for Treating Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome. *Jama*, 314(19), 2023. doi:10.1001/jama.2015.13537
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2463848>

The Opioid Baby Class Actions before the Court originated from West Virginia, Illinois, California, Missouri, Louisiana, Tennessee and Maryland. Each action seeks equitable relief and money damages aimed at securing dedicated funding to help alleviate the suffering inflicted upon this wholly innocent class by the Defendants. Due to what has been described as an epidemic of addicted newborns, and due to the discovery needs and questions of fact and law unique to this class, Plaintiffs propose the establishment of a NAS/Opioid Baby Limited Discovery and Litigation Track.

PURPOSE OF THE TRACK

The undersigned was afforded the opportunity to advocate for the creation of a track for these cases at the status conference on May 10, 2018. As discussed during the status conference, the Opioid Babies have unique discovery and settlement needs in this MDL.

Unlike the vast majority of the cases in this MDL, the Opioid Baby Class calls not only for direct victim compensation but also for medical monitoring. Most infants diagnosed with NAS are born into financially difficult circumstances. Money damages placed in trust with a Guardian *ad Litem* can provide these children with a much-needed springboard into a productive adult life.

Through medical monitoring, healthcare providers can accumulate the epidemiologic data necessary to identify and provide the Opioid Babies with necessary medical treatments throughout their lifetime. Moreover, in the same manner that the ARCOS database will assist the attorneys general in prosecuting their claims against bad actors, the injunctive relief claims of the Opioid Babies will have a different but equally significant effect in helping to stem the growing crisis.

A separate limited track would enable the Opioid Baby Class to expend the time and funds necessary to retain experts, proceed with limited class discovery, and engage in motion practice into classwide issues, all of which will inform decisions about the Defendants' relative

exposure. Discovery would seek evidence of causation of actual damages for out-of-pocket sums for class representatives, with the plaintiffs breaking out opioid-weaning treatment costs using ICD-9 codes. Granting the Opioid Babies access to the ARCOS Database will further help to identify absent class members, quantify damages, and support Plaintiffs' allegations regarding the diversionary market. Evidence extracted from this database will ultimately aid the parties in reaching a settlement by providing a path to an evidence-based discussion about parsing liability among the Defendants.

At the end of the day, in addition to direct payments to victims, Plaintiffs envision an irrevocable, court-administered, replenishing medical trust to which healthcare professionals providing NAS-related treatment or testing would submit invoices directly to the trust administrator for direct payment and data release. The trust could be either nationwide in scope, or established on a state-by-state basis. This trust would also pay for the cost of ongoing epidemiological research which will assist in the evolution of medical knowledge regarding latent health impacts of NAS.

AUTHORITY FOR THE TRACK

The JPML recognized the probability that separate tracks would be required when this MDL 2804 was created. The Transfer Order to this Court notes:

“The transferee judge might find it useful, for example, to establish different tracks for the different types of parties or claims.”
... “As reflected in our questions at oral argument, this litigation might evolve to include additional categories of plaintiffs and defendants, as well as different types of claims.”

See MDL #2804 Doc 382, 9:18-15:17 & 59:11-25.

It is well established that this Court, as the MDL Transferee Court:

...can employ any number of pretrial techniques-such as establishing separate discovery and/or motion tracks for each mutual

fund family and and/or separate tracks for the different types of actions involved-to efficiently manage this litigation.

In re Janus Mut. Funds Inv. Litigation, 310 F. Supp. 2d 1359, 1361 (U.S.J.P.M.L. 2004). *See also In re Federal Home Loan Mortg. Corp (Freddie Mac) Securities Litigation*, 643 F. Supp. 2d 1378, 1380 (U.S.J.P.M.L. 2009). Generally, Wright & Millers, 15 Fed Prac & Proc Juris § 3865 (4th ED Westlaw April 2018).

This Court's authority is expansive and can be wielded creatively to achieve the objectives of centralization:

Courts interpret the phrase "pretrial proceedings" broadly, to give the transferee judge control over any and all proceedings before trial. The transferee judge inherits the entire pretrial jurisdiction that the transferor court could have exercised had the case not been transferred. This clearly encompasses plenary power to oversee and manage discovery and to decide discovery motions. The court may designate a magistrate judge or appoint a master to perform appropriate tasks. In addition to all the authority exercised as a district judge in the transferee court, the transferee judge has the "powers of a district judge in any district for the purpose of conducting pretrial depositions."

Id. at § 3866. *See, In re Corrugated Container Antitrust Litigation*, 655 F. 2d 748 (7th Cir. 1981). *On reh 'g*, 661 F.2d 1145 (7th Cir. 1981), *aff'd* 459 U.S. 248 (1983).

Finally, *The Manual for Complex Litigation* (Fourth) provides further support for the relief requested. *See* §22.31 (more representative cases [make] more reliable results; § 22.311 (Aggregation for trial not appropriate where causation is uncertain or varying).

Permeating the entirety of the Manual, Fourth, is the balance that must be struck between the competing interests of efficiency and fairness. The challenges in achieving that balance are due to difficulties that inhere in complex litigation and what from time to time are essentially breakdowns of the adversarial process. Creativity is the key for district judges who must take an increasingly more significant and influential role throughout the court of the litigation.

Wright & Miller, 15 Fed. Prac. & Proc. Juris. § 3868 (4th ed Westlaw April 2018).

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, Plaintiffs' pray that their motion is granted.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Scott R. Bickford

MARTZELL, BICKFORD & CENTOLA

Scott R. Bickford (LA 1165)

Lawrence J. Centola, III (LA 27402)

Spencer R. Doody (LA 27795)

338 Lafayette Street

New Orleans, LA 70130

Telephone: 504-581-9065

Facsimile: 504-581-7635

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ljc@mbfirm.com

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usdcndoh@mbfirm.com

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